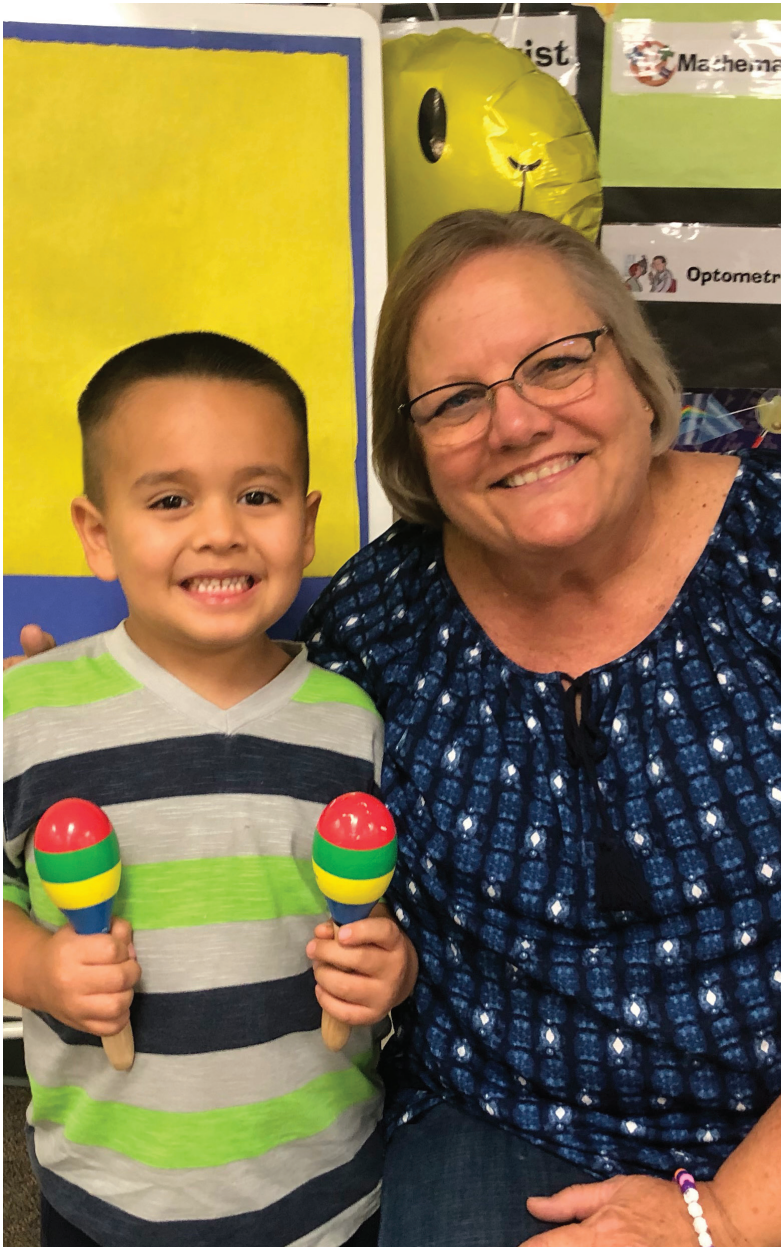




Santa Cruz Region

2022 Impact Report



From birth to age 5,
a child's brain develops more than
any other time in life.

90%

of a child's brain grows before kindergarten.

Early childhood matters.

First Things First (FTF) partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Santa Cruz Region, there are **4,416 children** (under age 6) with **35% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.



I'm hopeful that all of us affiliated with First Things First can exploit the intellectual resources, within and without the First Things First organization, and discover new ways to bang our drum louder about the vital importance of early childhood education, health and development."



Bill Kirkpatrick

Chair of FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council

FTF Santa Cruz Regional Key Impact Highlights [State Fiscal Year 2022]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

98

Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

629

Families or caregivers served by receiving referrals or by participating in activities at family resource centers.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

228

Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

66

Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.



Preventive Health

377

Children received fluoride varnishes applied to protect against childhood tooth decay.

86

Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

Additional Strategies

736

Activities

were held for parents to learn about early childhood development and resources at family resource centers.

80

Families with young children

participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.



Family resource center prepares Nogales family for children's school experience

Marisla Diaz's son was nearing his first birthday when she sought out classes to deepen her parenting skills in support of her first child's growth and development.

With young Jesus in tow, she started attending classes at the Nogales Family Resource Center, which offers families with children up to age 5 various classes, activities and social events. In one of her early classes, the mother learned about the importance of nurturing a healthy parent-child relationship, while her child engaged in age-appropriate activities.

The First Things First Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council funds the center, which is run through a partnership between the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and the Nogales Unified School District.

Diaz liked their experiences, so she kept going back to the resource center.

"I liked the mix of classes," she said. "You learn while spending time with your kids in a different environment. The kids also get to learn and spend time with other kids the same age."

Families have free access to a dozen different parenting classes offered in English and Spanish. Diaz has attended them all. Jesus, now 5, still goes to the resource center once a week as does his younger sister, Marisla, 3.

Stephanie Garcia, the center's site coordinator, said the goal is to help children like Jesus and his sister Marisla, get ready for kindergarten. The program targets children up to age 5 because it is considered a critical period for brain development.

Jesus already has learned skills that will prove useful when he starts kindergarten in the fall, she said. Since he recognizes most letters and knows how to properly hold a pencil, "he's not going to be struggling."

In the near future, Garcia said, the center's early literacy activities that aim to instill a love of reading while improving vocabulary, comprehension and attention span, will make it easier for Jesus to learn to read.

"All the classes are really good, they encourage the kids to read books, they do activities that go with the books, they practice with scissors," she said. "As they get older, they start doing activities that are a little bit harder, they prepare them for school very well."

When Diaz expressed concern over her son's language development, the resource center guided the mother through the process of securing speech therapy for Jesus through the Nogales Unified School District. "He had a speech delay and I was iffy about starting that process," she said. "The staff at the center made it easier."

The speech therapy that her son has received since he was a toddler has helped him improve his verbal communication, Diaz said. "He's still taking it now because he's still working on his pronunciation, but you can understand what he's trying to tell you."

Jesus is now in preschool, where the skills he learned at the resource center already have served him well, according to feedback teachers have given his mother.

"It does make a difference," said Diaz, who seeks to ensure a similar learning experience for her daughter.



Read more FTF stories at
FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories

FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council

FTF regional partnership councils are made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and inform how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven programs

and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families. Some of the programs in this region include Parents as Teachers, Family Resource Centers and Happy Smiles/Sonriza Feliz.

FTF Santa Cruz SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Strengthening Families

\$679,229

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$351,146

Preventive Health

\$162,321

Research and Evaluation

\$37,953

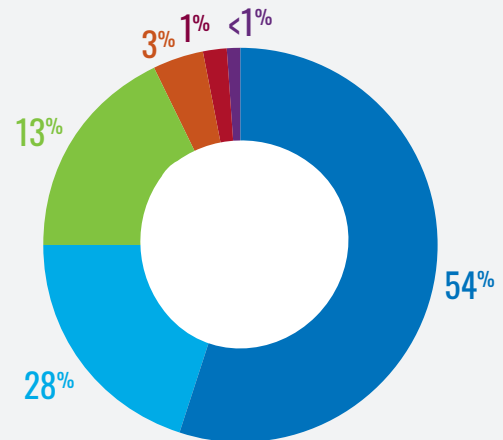
Parent and Community Awareness

\$17,934

Coordination

\$9,633

Total \$1,258,216



FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair

William Kirkpatrick

Vice Chair

Laura Monarque

Members

Chris Ciruli

Norma "Erika"

Garcia Montañó

John Fanning

Celina Landa

Adriana Lopez

Melisa Lunderville

Karen Rovang

David Verdugo

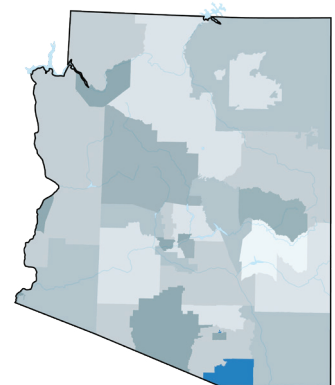
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The **FTF Santa Cruz Region** covers almost all of Santa Cruz County, the smallest county in Arizona. Situated in the Sonoran desert of southeast Arizona, Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz Region are home to six communities: Nogales, Patagonia, Rio Rico, Sonoita, Elgin and Tubac. Nogales is the county seat and is one of the largest ports of entry between Mexico and the United States. The area surrounding the Amado community in the northwestern corner of the county is assigned to the Pima South Region.

Learn more at

FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Santa-Cruz